

## FREEDOM AND THE COMPLEMENT IDENTITIES OF MEN AND WOMEN

### Introduction

An important contemporary threat to human freedom is a lack of understanding of the nature and identity of the human person, and more particularly, a lack of understanding about the complement identities of men and women. (This ignorance about what is really human and how women and men are different ways of being human, operates at many levels in society. It also penetrates into the heart of Christian philosophy and into Christian vocation.)

In this paper, I will trace some of the metaphysical and anthropological roots of various struggles within Christian philosophy to understand the differentiation of men and women within a common human and personal identity.<sup>1</sup> I will try to show how lack of knowledge and wilful rejection of the destiny, call, essence, and personhood of woman and man constitutes a contemporary threat to the exercise of human freedom.)

The paper will be divided into three sections to correspond with three historical periods in the history of Christian philosophy. The first section will consider attempts in ancient Greek and medieval Christian philosophy to provide a metaphysical foundation for the identities of man and woman. The second section will elaborate theories of the 'fully human' in humanism from the renaissance to early twentieth century. The third section will consider the contributions of Blessed Edith Stein to the metaphysical and anthropological challenges to human freedom posed in the previous two sections of the paper.

Before beginning my analysis, I would like to clarify the use of 'freedom' in my argument. By 'freedom' I understand the decisions within a human person, through which he

or she governs, possesses, and constitutes himself or herself as a person. Usually free decisions lead to acts through which the individual creates himself or herself as a particular kind of man or woman in the context of community.<sup>2</sup> Given this notion of freedom, we can speak of a person as being more or less free.

In addition, I would like to clarify the use of 'complementarity' as in a theory of sex complementarity. By 'sex complementarity' I understand the theory that men and women are considered to be simultaneously- significantly different and equal in dignity and worth. If the significant difference is rejected, then the theory becomes a sex unity theory; if the equal dignity and worth is rejected, then the theory becomes a sex polarity theory.<sup>3</sup>

My method of analysis will begin with a consideration of the relation between the concept of woman and the concept of the human being within a particular philosopher. Then, with this starting point, I will explore how a model of sex complementarity is most appropriate for a Christian philosophy of the respective identities of women and men.<sup>4</sup> In the analysis, a philosophical attention to human nature and generation will be contrasted with a Christian theological attention to human regeneration in the Spirit through Grace. Therefore this philosophical analysis will consider the nature of man and woman within the theological context of a world which is created, fallen, and open to redemption through relation with God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### Section I: Ancient and Medieval Philosophy

As with most areas in western philosophy, the fundamental questions about sex identity were first posed by the ancient Greeks. Plato thought that human identity was located in a

sexless soul that through a series of reincarnations came to be reborn in different kinds of sex identified bodies. In the *Timaeus* Plato suggested that men who "were cowards or led unrighteous lives may with reason be supposed to have changed into the nature of women in the second generation."<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, Plato constructed his utopian *Republic* and elaborated its *Laws* in such a way that some women could escape the cycle of rebirths as well as men. Allowing for a weaker female nature, Plato provided a longer time for women's education. In this way women and men could "recover their wings" as Socrates expressed it, and be reunited forever with the Forms. Women philosophers forfeited care of children, monogamous marriage, and private property to live like men philosophers.

Plato envisaged an ultimate equality of men and women, but this equality was metaphysically grounded in a unisex model of human identity- or a sexless soul. Being a man or a woman was something that happened temporarily, and was sloughed off with the body as the sexless soul aimed towards union with the Heaven of Forms. Ultimately, there was no significant difference between the sexes.<sup>6</sup> We can call this anthropological view of Plato a kind of sex unity or unisex theory.

Aristotle chose a different metaphysical foundation for his anthropology. He argued that the soul was the form of the informed body. However, Aristotle was faced with a metaphysical problem. If the human form is what distinguished human beings from members of other species, and matter was the principle of individuation within a species, how could he explain the fact that the human species was divided into females and males? To solve this problem, Aristotle introduced the notion of contrariety, and the female was understood to be the contrary privation

of the male, as dark was the contrary of light, or bad of good.<sup>7</sup> He concluded that sexual difference occurred in virtue of the animal nature of human beings as concrete wholes, and that the female was the privation of the male within the same human species.

Aristotle further developed a theory of generation that explained the generation of a female as occurring when the human form, contained in the seed supplied by the father, did not well match the matter provided by the mother. He concluded that the female state is a kind of "deformity" or imperfect human state, which occurs in the "ordinary course of nature."<sup>8</sup> Some consequences of this natural deformity of the female nature was that the woman's deliberative faculty or rational part of the soul was considered to be "without authority" over her irrational part of the soul, and her particular virtue was not self-governance or governance over another, but obedience of a man's rational principle.<sup>9</sup> In addition, woman's virtue included silence, while man's virtue included public participation in dialogue and building the civis.

We could summarize this view by saying that Aristotle envisaged woman as the contrary privation of man, defective in natural formation, and limited interiorly because of the lack of authority of her rational principle over her irrational part of the soul. The woman was locked into a particular limitation of human perfection because she was limited by her imperfect nature; on the other hand, the man was able to become more fully human (wise and good) by exercising his rational principle in self-governance. We could call this anthropological view a kind of sex polarity theory.

At the end of Greek philosophy we have two rather different views of the respective identities of men and women and of the fully human being. In Plato's sex unity theory, both men and women can become fully human, but only by escaping their bodily existence; in Aristotle's

sex polarity theory the identities of men and women are tied to their embodiment, but a man may become more fully human than a woman.

When Christianity intersected with the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophical traditions of sex identity, some clear tensions arose. For example, St. Augustine (354-430), directly asked about the implications of the sex polarity view for the Christian belief that in resurrection all imperfections are erased. In City of God he asked:

There are some who think that in the resurrection all will be men, and that women will lose their sex... For myself, I think that those others are more sensible who have no doubt that both sexes will remain in the resurrection.<sup>10</sup>

He concluded that: "In the resurrection, the blemishes of the body will be gone, but the nature of the body will remain. And certainly, woman's sex is her nature and no blemish..."<sup>11</sup>

Augustine, as is well known, opened up a whole new range of thinking about human freedom. In his works and letters, he defended particularly women's freedom. For example, he argued that a father could not force his daughter to become Christian, and he defended the virtue of a woman who had been raped against her will.<sup>12</sup> He supported an equal dignity between men and women at the same time as he recognized a significant differentiation between the two sexes both in the state of creation and of resurrection. While Augustine's works also contain elements of sex polarity for married women and sex unity for women religious, in general his theory suggests a kind of sex complementarity. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) was the first Christian writer to articulate a thorough anthropology of sex complementarity based on the metaphysics of a differentiated informed male and female body.<sup>13</sup>

In medieval philosophy, the ancient Greek view that women's nature was imperfect was overcome by a belief that in the order of grace woman was potentially as perfect as man.

Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) in the *Summa Theologiae* argued that grace acts on the soul in the manner of a formal cause; he called it an accidental form of the soul.<sup>14</sup> The fact that grace is not a virtue of a power of the soul is important for the concept of woman, because the virtue of a power perfects the nature, and if the nature were deformed from the start, it would never be as perfect as a nature which was not deformed. Mary, a woman whom we believe, was "full of grace" was the most perfect human being to have ever existed would not be limited in her perfection. St. Thomas argues that grace is in the essence (not the powers) of the soul through which a human being may participate in the Divine Nature, "after the manner of a likeness, through a certain regeneration or re-creation."<sup>15</sup>

St. Thomas adopted the distinction of his teacher, St. Albert the Great (1193-1280), between universal and particular intention of nature, and he applied it to the issue of women's identity "Only as regards nature in the individual is female something defective and "manque"...But with reference to nature in the species as a whole, the female is not something "manque," but is according to the work of creation."<sup>16</sup> Thomas was clear that ultimately woman was in no way inferior to man. In this theological solution to Aristotle's metaphysical problem, the natural imbalance of the contraries, male and female, was overturned by the power of grace, so that women saints and men saints were equally well formed in their *terminus* as willed by the Creator. A male and female, who began as contraries were actually complements in the plan of God.

The Christian emphasis on the uniqueness of the person and the call of individual persons to become fully human by sanctification is found in Romans 8 where the specific Christian man or woman is described as foreknown, predestined, called, justified and glorified.<sup>17</sup> How does

this concept of God's foreknowledge and predestination of a particular man or woman to be a Christian fit with soul/body metaphysics of the Greeks? How does it effect the Platonic theory that sex identity is simply a matter of the body, a shell that is taken up or put down?

John Scotus Erigena (810-877), a Christian Platonist, suggested that sex identity is an effect of the Fall, and he Christianized Plato's sex unity theory by stating that in Heaven there will no longer be sex distinctions.<sup>18</sup> In the *Summa Theologiae* Thomas Aquinas introduced the notion of two levels of generation: vegetative generation through human nature, and spiritual regeneration through grace, or participation in Divine Nature. The human being is more or less free to decide how he or she will live out that predestined call to be fully in the image and likeness of God.<sup>19</sup> Grace provides the disposition, but freedom is expressed in the acts of self-determination, self-governance, and self-gift.

## Section II: Renaissance and Modern Philosophy

Beginning in the fourteenth century some early modern philosophers argued that certain academic and social structures interfered with the opportunity to become fully human. Their reflections led to the beginnings of a new movement in philosophy called "humanism." In its earliest forms of Renaissance humanism, as expressed by Petrarch (1304-1374), Pico Mirandola (1463-1494), Ficino (1433-1499), and others, was Christian, and it sought, among other things, to articulate principles of full human development. Being "fully human" meant being created in the image of a transcendent Christian God, having a classical (rather than scholastic) education, participating in private and public forms of dialogue, and developing wisdom and virtue by integrating the emotions, intellect, and will through self governance.

Right from the start of humanism we also find the beginnings of what is later called "feminism," or systematic arguments to remove obstacles for women to become fully human. Christine de Pisan (1363-1431) identified the following limitations to women's freedom to become fully human: satirists devaluation and slander of women and of married love within a sex polarity framework, the general lack of knowledge of the history of wise and virtuous women, and the fact that women appeared to lack self governance. It is important to note that this renaissance feminism was also a committed Christian humanism, and it defended a sex complementarity theory that supported the full growth of women, men, and children with equal vigour. To be fully human meant to be educated, self-governed, and a full participant in public and private dialogue with the complement sex.<sup>20</sup>

In the seventeenth century we find a second form of humanism emerging. Enlightenment humanism was also Christian in its roots, although it lost this important foundation before long. Having its first origins in Descartes' (1596-1650) "cogito ergo sum," and the detachment of the mind from the body, early enlightenment humanism and feminism both argued that women and men were alike created by God with the same kind of mind (which like the Platonic soul was a sexless thing). They concluded that to be fully human, a person had to exercise the mind well in higher levels of thinking and ignore the body to the greatest possible extent.

Very soon early enlightenment feminists in the Cartesian tradition began to identify specific obstacles to women's freedom to become fully human. Poullain de la Barre (1647-1723) in *De l'égalité des deux sexes* (1673) and Mary Astell (1688-1731) in *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest* argued that custom was the main danger to women's freedom because it limited the education of their reason and placed shackles

on their will.<sup>21</sup> In particular, custom included both the sex polarity attitudes that implied women had less capacity for self governance than men, and also external structures of society that denied women access to higher education and to philosophical thinking which could help to develop the rational faculty. These early enlightenment humanists were mostly Protestant Christian, and they believed, as had the Catholic humanists before them, that men and women were created by God with equal dignity. However, the thought of enlightenment humanists tended more towards a sex unity model of sex identity, rather than a sex complementarity model, because it placed such a strong emphasis on the similarity of men's and women's minds as distinguished from their bodies.

In a second phase of enlightenment humanism, in the eighteenth century, we find several new directions of thought about sex identity and human identity beginning to emerge. Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1788) argued that to be truly human meant being created by God as naturally good (and not in a fallen state), being responsible for developing one's own identity by the exercise of the will and reason in harmony with nature, rejecting all forms of external tutelage, and becoming citizens by forming a common will through a social contract, or law that men gave to themselves.

It is a later enlightenment view of the human being as naturally free and good, without God and standing independent of all external forms of law, including divine law, that radically changed the modern understanding of the person. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) argued that true enlightenment is the release of man from any direction or tutelage by another human being or institution.<sup>22</sup> Instead, man's own reason became the sole guide for building the common good through a common will.

Soon we find an enlightenment feminism emerging which argued that women are not able to be fully human because they are not able to participate in building this common will. Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, argued that the danger to women's freedom to become truly human consisted in denying her equal participation in citizenship with men through the forbidding of women to vote or hold public office. In addition, Wollstonecraft criticized both Rousseau's and Kant's epistemology which limited women's virtue to the development of sense and taste and extended man's virtue to the development of reason.<sup>23</sup> For Wollstonecraft, this epistemological form of sex polarity denied women rights to the education of their reason, which in turn limited their capacity to develop self governance, and therefore their freedom to become fully human.

The enlightenment feminists were Protestants and they worked towards improving society for all- men, women, and children alike. They also supported at times a Christian based sex complementarity theory, but held more often elements of a Cartesian or rationalist based sex unity theory.

Enlightenment humanism spawned three different forms of contemporary humanisms- marxist humanism, existentialist humanism, and pragmatic secular humanism- all of which argued that being truly human demands the rejection of God and of all external forms of tutelage. Conversely, each of these nineteenth and twentieth century forms of humanism claims that it is possible to achieve human perfection simply through the action of human beings alone. Human nature- a new kind of naturalism- becomes once again the ultimate value. Human beings no longer are thought of as generated and then regenerated in Christ. We will now briefly

consider the key components in each of these theories because they provide the secular context of contemporary Christian thought about human freedom and sex identity.

The first form of contemporary enlightenment humanism- or marxist humanism argued that class society, private property, alienating human work, and organized religious were obstacles keeping human beings from becoming truly human.<sup>24</sup> Members of one class of society were seen as inevitable enemies of members of another class of society. For the first time in history, a form of humanism emerged which argued that other human beings were such extreme enemies of the freedom of some human beings that they should be killed or destroyed. No longer is humanism interested in supporting the full development of all human beings.

Feminist arguments in the marxist tradition began with Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Frederick Engles (1820-1895) and then spread to England and North America. They focused on the economic exploitation of women in the labour force. They also described women as unpaid proletariat exploited within a family by the husband and the state. As a consequence marxist feminists began to perceive marriage, children, and even the unborn developing child as enemies to women's freedom to become fully human. Sometimes they argued that housewives should be paid for their reproductive work as men were paid for their productive work. At other times they supported abortion on demand.<sup>25</sup> One contemporary marxist feminist, Shulamith Firestone, even went so far as to argue that childbearing itself is a "tyranny" for women, and she suggested that women (and men) will only become free when all children are produced by "test tube incubation" and artificial reproduction.<sup>26</sup>

The consistent theory of sex identity common to all marxist humanism is a form of sex unity. There are no significant differences between men and women in this theory. In spite of

the fact that marxism is self described as a kind of dialectical materialism, it turns out to be a form of rationalism in the area of sex identity.

The second form of contemporary enlightenment humanism- or existential humanism- was also explicitly atheistic in its roots. Jean Paul Sartre situated the human being as the supreme law giver who creates himself by projecting himself outside of himself as a pure conscious subjectivity towards future projects in the world.<sup>27</sup> Sartre claimed that: "The true limit of my freedom lies purely and simply in the very fact that an Other apprehends me as the Other-as-object...This limit to my freedom is, as we see, posited by the Other's pure and simple existence..."<sup>28</sup> In this astonishing development Sartre argues that any other person, just by existing and looking at me, becomes an enemy to my freedom. We have his famous statement of Garcin in *No Exit*: "Hell is -other people."<sup>29</sup>

Simone de Beauvoir developed an existentialist feminism within the Sartrean model of human identity. She argued that woman's body itself is a threat to woman's freedom because it imprisons her "within the limits of her nature;" and she argues that the transcendence of men is an enemy to women's freedom, because "men compel her to assume the status of the Other...and doom her to immanence..."<sup>30</sup> As is well known, deBeauvoir publicly rejected marriage and supported abortion on demand. In addition, both she and Sartre were active supporters of terrorism within a marxist revolutionary political movement. So in existentialist humanism as in marxist humanism other persons are described as being such strong enemies of human freedom that killing them is justified.

Existentialist humanism as described by Sartre is often filled with a sex polarity theory, that women are different and less fully human than men. deBeauvoir, agrees that sex polarity

is inherited through society, and is an almost inevitable inheritance of the female and male bodies, but she struggles to articulate a sex unity theory of transcendence for women which help them to become more like men. Both Sartre and deBeauvoir see human consciousness- the for-itself- as the central human characteristic, and this for-itself is a sexless projecting transcendence. So in spite of the fact that their existentialism is a self described as opposed to rationalism, their theory turns out to be a kind of rationalism in the area of sex identity.

The third form of contemporary post-enlightenment humanism- or pragmatic secular humanism-has its roots in the thought of the Oxford philosopher Ferdinand Schiller and the American pragmatists William James and John Dewey. A basic component of this new humanism is a pragmatic theory that truth is only a man-made product, that is always evolving, and being tested solely by the experience of consequences.<sup>31</sup> Secular humanism also identifies itself as explicitly atheistic and argues that all organized religions are the enemy of human freedom. The *Humanist Manifesto* of 1933 stated that happiness is found only in success, success is measured by growth, and growth is the only moral end. A second *Humanist Manifesto* of 1973 stated further that all "[e]thics is autonomous and situational needing no theological or ideological sanction."<sup>32</sup> Being fully human in secular humanism means adopting a scientific and utilitarian model of experimental progress in all areas of life and working by human power alone to build a society which promotes the most growth and success of its members.

The American feminist movement, beginning in the 1960's, identified the "dehumanization" of housewives in the suburbs as the main enemy of women's freedom, because housewives felt they were not growing as human beings, were not successful (by society's economic standards), and were not happy.<sup>33</sup> Efforts to improve women's economic situation

focused on removing discrimination against women in the job market, and it introduced such actions as preferential hiring and reverse discrimination.

Through these actions women have come to identify men of the same class - applying for the same jobs-as their enemies. So for the first time, enemies of a woman's freedom are perceived to be men like them, with the same educational and professional background, rather than men from a different class or culture. In addition, women began to see the developing human being within her while she is pregnant as an enemy of her possibilities for growth. So abortion on demand has become a common rallying cry of the American feminist movement.

In this moderate form of pragmatic secular feminism, which focuses on legislation, we find a great emphasis on a projected equality of men and women, once a job has been acquired. This drive towards equality is so strong, that it tries to remove from legislation anything which might differentiate men from women. It leads to such anomalies that pregnancy is classified under a category of disease, or fathers are granted exactly the same paternity leave as mothers are granted maternity leave. Once again we see a tendency towards a rationalism which devalues the body and detaches the human identity from its sexually differentiated context.

Sum / In all three forms of post enlightenment humanism and feminism we have just considered there are common tendencies: a rejection of God, a rejection of organized religion, an adoption of a sex unity model of sex identity, a rationalist approach to the human being, and the identification of some human beings as enemies to one's own freedom, with the subsequent affirmation that in some cases they may be destroyed.

There are many other forms of feminism which have not been considered in this analysis. Radical feminism (for example, in Mary Daly) perceives all men as the enemy of women's

freedom, while socialist feminism (for example, Allison Jaggar) sees various political structures as the enemy of men's and women's freedom. I have also not considered various anti-humanisms common to post-modern deconstruction theories. These theories (for example, in Foucault or Derrida) with their corresponding feminisms (for example, in Kristeva or Wittig) argue that a metaphysics of the human being is itself an enemy of human freedom, and they advocate the refusal of any attempt to describe what is "fully human." Consideration of these views, while important, would take us too far beyond the limits of the present paper which seeks to consider more moderate and widespread theories of sex identity and human identity.

I will now turn to the third and final section of this paper to consider how one contemporary Christian philosopher has attempted to describe ways that men and women can exercise their freedom to become more fully human in complement relation with one another, and how this activity responds to the call to participate in the Divine likeness.

### **Section III: Edith Stein's Theory of Sex Complementarity**

Our discussion of the work of Blessed Edith Stein (1891-1942) will be divided into two parts: first, we will consider <sup>her</sup> how metaphysics and anthropology of sex differentiation overcomes problems of Aristotelian metaphysics, and second, we will consider how her analysis of Christian vocation challenges views encountered in the previous discussion of forms of advanced enlightenment humanism. It is my belief that Edith Stein offers an important foundation for a contemporary theory of sex complementarity within a Christian understanding of the human person.

Edith Stein's analysis flows from her attempt to synthesize phenomenology with thomistic metaphysics. In a 1932 essay entitled "Problems of Women's Education" she raises again Aristotle's question of whether or not the difference between men and women constitutes a difference in species.<sup>34</sup> The concept of an "unchangeable core" in woman's identity is later described by Stein as being due to an "inner form." She states: "I have spoken before of the species 'woman.' By *species* we understand a permanent category which does not change. Thomistic philosophy designates it by the term form, meaning an inner form which determines structure."<sup>35</sup>

The form which determines the structure of the individual woman or man is the soul of a particular gendered body. Now an individual soul, according to Stein, may be analyzed by abstraction according to a three fold analysis of "the 'species' of humanity, the [sub]species of woman, and individuality."<sup>36</sup> Stein argues that just as there is a permanence of inner form that determines the structure of a woman as a human being, so also there is an inner permanence of form that determines her structure as a woman. So she appears to offer a different answer to the question raised by Aristotle than had the Greek philosopher himself. Aristotle had claimed that there was no difference in form between a man and a woman; while Stein suggests that there is some difference in form between a man and a woman.

When Stein begins to compare actual differences between the inner structure of a woman and that of a man, she introduces another distinction. She argues that the relationship of soul and body is different in the two sub-species of woman and of man. So for Stein, gender difference includes difference in body and difference in the relationship of soul and body. This theory is developed in some detail in her work:

I am convinced that the species *humanity* embraces the double species *man* and *woman*; that the essence of the complete *human* being is characterized by this duality; and that the entire structure of the essence demonstrates the specific character. There is a difference, not only in bodily structure and in particular physiological functions, but also in the entire corporeal life. The relationship of soul and body is different in man and woman; the relationship of soul to body differs in their psychic life as well as that of the spiritual faculties to each other.<sup>37</sup>

By spiritual faculties, Stein is referring to the intellect and will. And by psychic life, she considers such areas as the 'lived experience of the body,' the interior and exterior sensations, imagination, passions, emotions, and so forth.

Even though a permanence of inner form and structure is identified in the concept of human species, or species of woman and species of man, Stein argues that species is a developmental concept. Consequently, the inner form gives a certain starting point to the structure, but the determination of the individual life by the free man or woman offers a wide range of possibilities which are much broader than the starting point:

the species does not come about in ready-made form at the beginning of existence; rather, the individual develops progressively in a process dependent on time. This process is not unequivocally predetermined but depends rather on several variable factors, among others, on man's freedom which enables him to work towards his own formation and that of others.<sup>38</sup>

As an educator Edith Stein identifies the steps through which this process of active self-formation takes place. She claims that the "first fundamental formation happens within the soul" in which the inner form of a man or a woman resides, and this inner form of a particular male or female human being "urges the evolution into a certain direction" of a fully mature unique man or woman. This evolution would involve a recognition of the male or female starting point of the lived-body-soul unity which is different for males and females.<sup>39</sup>

For purposes of amplification, we may make a distinction between a biological maleness or femaleness and a social-cultural masculinity and femininity. We may further say that only a man is male and only a woman is female, but a man or a woman may have a cluster of both masculine and feminine characteristics. Then, using Stein's analysis, we can consider an individual woman as having an interior structure that can be characterized as a nexus {woman-female-and feminine and masculine}, and an individual man has an interior structure that can be characterized as the nexus {man-male-masculine and feminine}. As the individual freely works within a dual species of human and either as man or woman, he or she continues to unfold, through free acts, the temporal development of a particular sub species from complementary male or female starting points. Stein concludes: "the species man and woman are also fully realized only in the total course of human development."<sup>40</sup>

The task for an individual woman or an individual man, then, becomes one of freely developing the self within a double species of human-man or human-woman. Philosophy provides the cognitive framework of inner structures within which this temporal activity can take place. If Edith Stein is correct in holding that the human being is an integral entity of lived-body-soul, and that there is a difference in inner form in the male human being and female human being which unfolds within this unity, then it would follow that there are definite characteristics of this difference which provide fundamentally different starting points for the development of individual identity in a particular woman or a particular man.

The empirical sciences, limited as they are to describing external behaviour, cannot identify these characteristics. Stein states directly: "statistics are of little help" in determining what is truly female and male or feminine and masculine.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, since women have some

masculine characteristics and men have some feminine characteristics, it is not possible to reach an understanding of the interior structure of the male or female person by an empirical methodology alone.<sup>42</sup> The cognition of this inner structure of a species woman and a species man may only be discovered through a thinking process proper to philosophy.

Stein, using a phenomenological methodology, tries to identify characteristics which flow from the male human embodiment and those which flow from the female human embodiment: "The feminine [female human] species expresses a unity and wholeness of the total psychosomatic personality and a harmonious development of faculties. The masculine [male human] species strives to enhance individual abilities in order that they may attain their highest achievements."<sup>43</sup> She also argues that the female corporeal structure of the body is oriented towards supporting new life within the mother, and the feminine will tends to emphasize personal and holistic choices; while the male corporeal structure of the body is oriented towards reproducing by detachment of seed, and the masculine will emphasize exterior, specialized choices.

Stein is adamant that individuals can freely choose to develop characteristics different from the ones to which they have a natural attraction through the different structure of their lived-body-soul inner form. In one context she states: "And who would deny the intellect and will of girls? That would be questioning their full humanity."<sup>44</sup> Or conversely, a man can, through free actions of the will either surrender to or reject emotional stimulations or interior and exterior formative influences.<sup>45</sup> Human life is always individual, and therefore, actions within it can express varying degrees of freedom.

It is also worth noting, that although Edith Stein has begun to identify particular characteristics as masculine and others as feminine, and in addition, although she has also sought to show a link between these characteristics and the inner structure of the male and female human being, her analysis stops short of prioritizing the characteristics in degrees of essential relationship to man's and woman's identity. This careful analysis still needs to be done, and it is a central task for contemporary research on sex and gender to consider. This research is particularly important in a contemporary philosophical context which is often influenced by a Cartesian approach to the person in which the mind and body are separated, and the centre of the self is located in a sexless rational ego as we saw so clearly in our analysis of advanced forms of enlightenment humanism.

In addition, post-Modernism, which further undermines a theory of the integral unity of the human being by denying even a centre of the self, has as one of its aims the dismissal of essential sex and gender characteristics altogether. One of the effects of this Cartesian and post-Modern mentality is the impression that masculine or feminine ~~characteristics are completely~~ socially constructed and that they have no relationship to the corporeal structure of the human being. Edith Stein's analysis directly challenges this assumption. Since the foundation of her philosophy is the assumption of the integral unity or essence of the human being as a lived-body-soul entity, it would seem that a Christian philosophy which also accepts this premise, would be well served by a serious investigation of her claims.

We will now return to the famous <sup>theological</sup> quotation from Romans 8, in which an individual man or woman is described as foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and glorified by God. Edith Stein's theological understanding of the way in which a human being is created "in the image

of God" adds a further dimension to the previously articulated conjugate "lived-body-soul" to become "lived-body-soul-spirit" as a trinitarian structure of the human being as person.<sup>46</sup> From the perspective of revelation, man and woman have an eternal dimension, a capacity to participate in Divine Life, through their spirit. When this capacity is exercised, the human being, which was only philosophically considered as an individual member of the human species, evolves to become a unique person, drawn into eternal life with the Divine Communion of Persons.

Now human life is able to go far beyond previous philosophical conceptions of the possibilities of nature: "...there is only one formative power which is not bound to the limits of nature, but, on the contrary, can transform the inner form further and from within; that is *the power of grace*."<sup>47</sup> Through receptivity to the redemptive action of grace, men and women can work to become more complete persons, and thereby bear witness in their own gift of self to the formative task of responding to the call to be more and more effectively conformed to the image of God.

However, human beings live in the context of a fallen world, and so the original harmonious human identity becomes distorted. The consequences of the Fall affect men and women differently. Stein notes the effects of the Fall so that in some cases: "...the relations of the sexes since the Fall has become a brutal relationship of master and slave."<sup>48</sup> One could say here that men and women suffer from different kinds of things. In these cases, a man may suffer through his "sweat" and "toil" of enslavement to, or alienation from his work, through a "brutal despotism" or exploitation of woman in his call as husband, or in a further decadence of either neglect or domination in the way he lives out his "original call of fatherhood."<sup>49</sup> Or in some

situations, a woman may suffer through her pain in bringing forth life, through a servile dependence on man as spouse and wife, through "distortions and alienation in her spiritual life, and through a rejection of her call to some form of motherhood."<sup>50</sup>

Therefore, while the primary cause of suffering in both man and woman is due to a disorder within the faculties (the senses versus the spirit and the will versus the intellect) and a disorder in the relation with God, since woman's and man's original nature is different, the particular ways in which this suffering manifests itself may also differ. With respect to sex complementarity and freedom, we could say that the faculties of intellect and will are the same in women and men, but their data and orientation differ in some respects because of the sex differentiated lived experience of the body and context for decisions. As Stein describes it, men and women are "complement co-sufferers at the same time as they are "co-responsible" for humanity."<sup>51</sup> This fact of difference is why feminisms emerge in the context of various forms of humanisms.

This historical context of a fallen state of humanity is mitigated in Stein's theology by a belief in the possibility of redemption through relation with Jesus Christ. Edith Stein proclaims: "The Lord clearly declared that the new kingdom of God would bring a new order of relationship between the sexes, i.e., it would put an end to the relationships caused by the Fall and would restore the original order."<sup>52</sup>

If we reflect for a moment on the discussion of humanism and feminism in the second part of this paper, we could say that the theorists who rejected God, rejected also the opportunity for redemption from a fallen state. They made themselves into 'little gods,' vainly attempting redemption by human efforts alone. So their philosophy of sex identity was incomplete, and their

actions remained sterile in the face of increasingly complex situations. The later enlightenment humanists offered rationalistic solutions to problems in the world and they ended up with a distorted sex unity theory to compensate for the distorted sex polarity context of the fallen world. Only a Christian philosophy of sex identity- an integral sex complementarity- can offer a redemptive possibility for men and women to become truly in complement relation with one another, and ultimately to be able to build, with the help of God, authentic communities of persons. It is worth noting that the only humanisms which sought to help all men, women, children, and developing human beings in pregnant women, to become fully human were the Christian humanisms of the renaissance and contemporary Christian humanism as developed in Edith Stein and in the personalist tradition.<sup>53</sup>

A Christian philosophy of sex identity must contain reference to the call to redemption through grace, and the call to be conformed to the image of Christ. When Edith Stein asks one of her central questions about vocation she points to the way in which men and women have a different challenge in this duty to become fully human through the integration of masculine and feminine characteristics. She asks: "Yet, what does to be called mean? A call must have been sent from someone, to someone, for something in a distinct manner."<sup>54</sup> She asks again: "to what are man and woman called?"<sup>55</sup> It would appear that there is a two-fold answer to this question: a man must come to know his basic male identity through nature and through grace and a woman to know her basic female identity through nature and grace. Without this knowledge men and women can not use their freedom well, that is, they can not acquire proper self governance nor constitute themselves as fully human persons.

Edith Stein explicitly links this call to the development of men and women to become fully human in complement ways:

Whether man or woman, whether consecrated or not, each one is called to the imitation of Christ. The further the individual continues on this path, the more Christlike he will become. Christ embodies the ideal of human perfection: in Him all bias and defects are removed, and the masculine and feminine virtues are united and their weaknesses redeemed; therefore, His true followers will be progressively exalted over their natural limitations. That is why we see in holy men a womanly tenderness and a truly maternal solicitude for the souls entrusted to them while in holy women there is manly boldness, proficiency, and determination. We are thus led through the imitation of Christ to the development of our original human vocation which is to present God's image in ourselves: ...the Father, as one begets and educates children for the kingdom of God through spiritual paternity and maternity.<sup>56</sup>

We could say that we are stamped by a particular flesh, when created in the image of God. This stamp creates the call as a particular man or particular woman, with a unique and unrepeatable vocation. Being conformed to the image of the Son (*Romans* 8) involves becoming ever more able to give oneself in freedom to others- as a father or as a mother. The way we give ourselves to others in charity will be stamped by this flesh. Women are called to give themselves in charity to others through some particular form of motherhood, and men are called to give themselves in charity to others through some particular form of fatherhood. Stein often repeats that "...fatherhood appears to be an original vocation of man, given to him beside his particular calling," and "... woman's primary vocation is maternal..."<sup>57</sup> The primary vocation of man is to be father and of woman is to be mother, regardless of whether it is in the lay, clerical, or religious state.

At the heart of the issue of sex identity is the belief that Christians are predestined to be regenerated in grace. We need to be transformed by grace in order to become a perfect woman or a perfect man, fully human, fully personal in communion with other persons. Our destiny is to be transformed into the image and likeness of God through the action of the Holy Spirit. Edith Stein recognizes this destiny in her works on sex identity: "God created humanity as man and woman, and He created both according to His own image. Only the purely developed masculine and feminine nature can yield the highest attainable likeness to God."<sup>58</sup> And she concludes that: "...the image of God is established as a duty, vocation, or destiny of mankind---, i.e. of man and of woman."<sup>59</sup>

Sr. Prudence Allen, RSM, PhD

Professor- Department of Philosophy

Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

### References

1. Material for this paper has been drawn from previous work published with the help of grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Foundation. See especially, *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution 750BC-1250AD* 2nd edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), "Sex and gender differentiation in Hildegard of Bingen and Edith Stein," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 20, (Summer, 1993): 389-414, and "Metaphysics of Form, Matter, and Gender," presented at Lonergan Conference, Boston College, June 1995.
2. For this notion of freedom, I draw upon the work of M. A. Krapiec, *I-Man: An Outline of Philosophical Anthropology* (New Britain, Ct.: Mariel Publications, 1993), chapter vii, 185- 218. [trans. of *Ja-Człowiek, Zarys antropologii filozoficznej* (Lublin, 1979); and Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht: D. Riedel, 1979), chapter iv, 149-186. [trans. of *Osoba i Czyn*, (Cracow, 1969).
3. For a more detailed account of the theory of complementarity see, "Integral Sex Complementarity and the Theology of Communion," *Communio: International Catholic Review*, Volume xvii, no.4 (winter 1990): 523-544 and "A Woman and a Man as Prime Analogical Beings," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. lxvi, no. 4 (1992): 465-482.
4. The word "gender" has been recently introduced in North American philosophy to represent especially the socially acquired differences between men and women (or masculine and feminine characteristics). In this context it is often contrasted with the word "sex" which is limited to biological aspects of male and female nature. My own use of the words "sex" and "gender" does not separate social and biological aspects of a man or woman. Instead, I use **gender** to include both biological and social components, reaching back to its original root meaning of begetting found in gens or generation. In the context of European languages which do not have an equivalent of the English "gender," the words "sex" and "gender" will be used interchangeably. Part of my aim in this paper is to explore philosophical foundations for sex or gender complementarity within the Christian tradition.
5. Plato, *Timaeus* 92e-91a, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961).
6. For a more detailed account of this view see, Sr. Prudence Allen, RSM *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution: 750BC-AD 1250*, second edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans, 1996).
7. Aristotle asked in Book X, chapter 9 of the *Metaphysics* whether or not this difference between males and females were such as to constitute a difference in species. See, Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1935), 1058a29-34.
8. Aristotle, *Parts of Animals*, Cambridge Mass, Harvard University Press, 1937), 775-a12-15 and 737a26-30.
9. Aristotle, *Politics* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1874), 1260a 1-5 and 1254b 16-25.

10. Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1966), XII, 17.
11. Augustine, *The City of God*, XII, 17.
12. Augustine, "Letter to Consecrated Virgins," *Letters* (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1951), no.35 and *The City of God*, II, 19.
13. See Hildegard of Bingen, *Hielkunde (Causae et Curae)* (Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag, 1957).
14. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (rpt. New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc., 1948), trans. English Dominican Province, I-II, Q. 110, rpl. Obj. 1 and 2.
15. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa*, I-II, Q 110, art. 4.
16. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa*, 1a, 75, 4.
17. The full quotation is as follows: "We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined he also called; and those he called he also justified; and those he justified he also glorified." *The New American Bible* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1986). *Romans* 8: 28-31. While in Greek philosophy a woman or a man was considered as merely "one of a kind" of human being in medieval Christian philosophy, the concept of the unique and unrepeatable identity of a person began to emerge. Certainly St. Augustine's **Confessions** and Boethius' **Consolation of Philosophy** attest to the importance of the individual person. Furthermore, Boethius' theological works offer the metaphysical definition of the person as an "individual substance of a rational nature."
18. John Scotus Erigena, *Periphyseon* (On the Division of Nature) (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1976), 533a11.
19. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Pt. 1-11, Q. 111-113.
20. A later Renaissance feminist humanist Lucrezia Marinelli, in her lengthy text *La Nobiltà et l'eccellenza della Donne co'Diffetti et Mancamenti de gli Huomini* (Venice: Gio. Batista Ciotti Sansese, 1601) [On the Nobility and Excellence of Women], directly and ironically appealed to an Aristotelian model of virtue to **overturn** Aristotelian sex polarity arguments about women's lack of wisdom, virtue, and full human development. In addition, Renaissance feminists, such as Marie de Gournay le Jars (1566-1645), may have appealed to Socrates or Plato for a foundation for equality of women and men, but she did not accept the unisex orientation of the ancient Greek philosophy, presumably because of the fundamentally Christian understanding of the place of the body in personal identity. See, for example *Egalité des hommes et des femmes*

(1622) and *Grief des Dames* (1626) in *La fille d'Alliance de Montaigne: Marie de Gournay* (Paris: Librairie Honore Champion, 1910), 70.

21. François Poullain de la Barre, *The Woman as Good as the Man: Or, the Equality of Both Sexes*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), 66, 102-3 and Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest* (New York: Source Book Press, 1970), 18, 73.

22. Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1978), 85.

23. For a more detailed account of the different epistemologies of these different theories of sex identity see Sr. Prudence Allen, "Rationality, Gender, and History," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. LXVIII (1994): 271-288.

24. Marx states this more formally as naturalism is humanism, communism is humanism mediated by annulment of private property, and atheism is humanism mediated by the annulment of religion. See Karl Marx, "Private Property and Communism," *Early Writings* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 155; *Communist Manifesto*, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1954), 13; and "Critique of Hegel's Dialectic," in *Early Writings*, 213.

25. See, Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (New York: International Publishers, 1972), 120 and Marlene Dixon, "We are not Animals in the Field: A Woman's Right to Choose," *The Future of Women* (San Francisco: Synthesis Publications, 1980), 124.

26. Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), 201. She argues: "Machines thus could act as the perfect equalizer, obliterating the class system based on exploitation of labour.", 201.

27. Jean Paul Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," in *Existentialism and Human Emotions* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), 50-51.

28. Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), 672-3.

29. Jean Paul Sartre, *No Exit and three other plays* (New York: Vintage, 1949), 47.

30. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, (New York: Vintage, 1953), xviii and xxxiv.

31. William James, "Pragmatism and Humanism" and "Humanism and Truth" in *Pragmatism* (Cleveland: Meridian, 1963).

32. See Corliss Lamont, *The Philosophy of Humanism* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1982). Appendix, 293-4.

33. Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1963). In fact the founding document of the National Organization of Women (NOW) identified growth of women as one of its prime aims.
34. Edith Stein, "Problems of Women's Education," *Essays on Women* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1987), 150. The next several pages borrow liberally from my article: "Sex and gender differentiation," 398ff.
35. Stein, "Problems," 162. She develops the Thomistic position. In the *Summa Contra Gentiles* St. Thomas states that "The soul is the form of the animated body." (New York: Benzinger Gros., 1923-9), II, 58, 14.
36. Stein, "Problems," 167. Stein puts a footnote to the 'species' as follows: "Whether it is more advisable to speak here of genus of or species can be determined only after an inquiry into the formal, ontological problem.", note 22, p. 274. It is perhaps helpful here to call the category of humanity 'the species,' and the category of woman or man 'the sub-species.'
37. Stein, "Problems," 177.
38. Stein, "Problems," 173.
39. Stein, "Fundamental Principles of Women's Education," in *Essays*, 116-117.
40. Stein, "Problems," 179.
41. Stein, "Spirituality of the Christian Woman," in *Essays*, 109.
42. Stein, "Spirituality," 108-9.
43. Stein, "Problems," 177-8. The insertion of [male human] and [female human] enables a more accurate rendering of the passage, for "masculine" and "feminine" are more appropriately considered as types and not as species in Stein's theory.
44. Stein, "Church, Woman and Youth," in *Essays* 238. See also "But this nature [of woman] is not uniform but varies according to types and individuals." "Problems," 150.
45. Stein, "Spirituality," 98-9.
46. Stein, *Endliches und Ewiges Sein*, [418], Complete translation in Augusta Spiegelman Gooch, "Finite and Eternal Being: Attempt at an ascent to the meaning of being," (PhD Diss., University of Dallas, 1981), 654.
47. Stein, "Principles," 117-8.
48. Stein, "The Separate Vocations of Man and Woman According to Nature and Grace," in *Essays*, 71. This view is repeated in Pope John Paul II, Encyclical *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 10:

"This 'domination' indicates the disturbance and loss of the stability of the fundamental equality which the man and woman possess in the 'unity of the two': and this is especially to the disadvantage of the woman, whereas only the equality resulting from their dignity as persons can give to their mutual relationship the character of an authentic 'communio personarum.'"

49. Stein, "Vocations," 72 and "Problems," 180.

50. Stein, "Problems," 180.

51. Stein, "Problems," 141.

52. Stein, "Vocations," 63.

53. While there is not time in this paper to demonstrate this point, it is important to identify the Lublin school of philosophy has contributing greatly to the foundations of this contemporary Christian humanism.

54. Stein, "Vocations," 57.

55. Stein, "Vocations," 58. See also, 82-3.

56. Stein, "Vocations," 84-5. See also, "We therefore achieve total humanity through Him and simultaneously, the right personal attitude," "Woman's Value," 252.

57. Stein, "Vocation," 72-73.

58. Stein, "Ethos," in *Essays*, 56.

59. Stein, "Problems," 174.